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# Idle Songs of an Idle Soldier

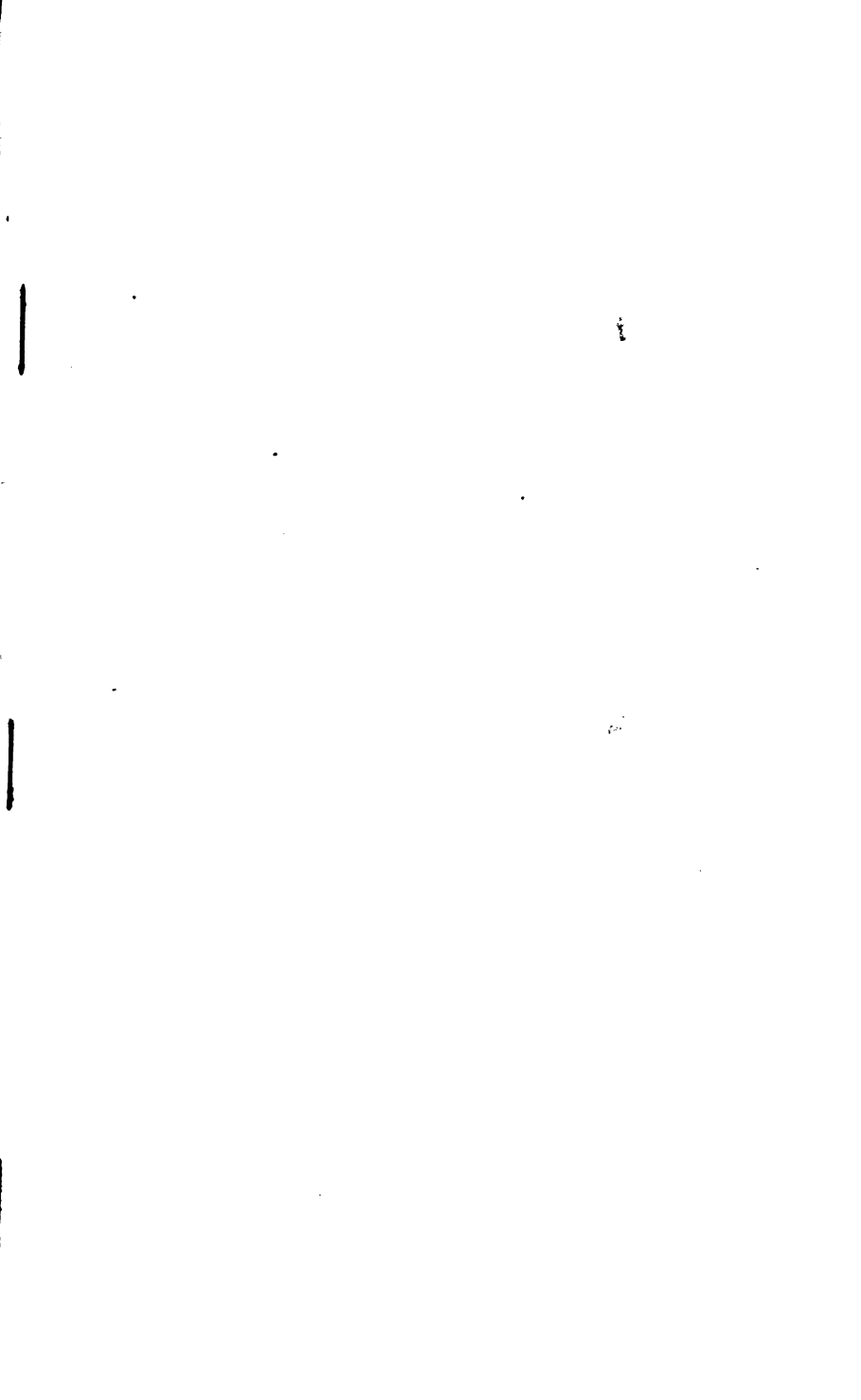
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# IDLE SONGS OF AN IDLE SOLDIER

BY

GEORGE M. MORELAND

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# Idle Songs of an Idle Soldier

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## AUTHOR'S NOTE.

These verses are the product of an idle soldier, as the title indicates, and are submitted, not as gems of thought which will endure till the end of Time, but simply as a fancy of the author to see what the world would think of these verses which have been jotted down all the way from New York to the Philippines and from the Mexican Gulf to the Great Lakes. If they possess merit, I am glad; if they do not, my only excuse is that I did the best I could; angels can do no more. If they should be the cause of making one person's life contain one ray more of sunshine or making one moment of one life less sad I shall feel that my labors have not been in vain.

GEORGE M. MORELAND.

Presidio of Monterey, California,  
July 5th, 1909.



# Idle Songs of an Idle Soldier

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## SLUMBER'S TRAIN.

Last night my thoughts went rambling back  
Adown Life's rugged lane—  
Adown a portion of the road  
Not fill'd with sin and pain.  
I saw the fields of cotton white;  
I heard the darkies' song;  
I saw the Mississippi stream  
In grandness sweep along.

The old time oak was standing yet  
Where father kept his plows;  
And Jake was whistling "Dixie Land"  
While driving home the cows.  
The cotton fields were just the same  
As they were years ago;  
The Mississippi murmured still  
The same song, soft and low.

The old doorway was just the same  
Where mother sat each day  
And told us tales of Bethlehem  
Or watched us idly play.  
I saw her sitting just the same  
All busy with her lace;  
I leap'd to clasp her in my arms  
For one long, sweet embrace.

I leap'd to clasp her in my arms  
For one embrace again.  
'Twas all a dream; I'd only gone  
Away on Slumber's Train.  
But what a pleasure 'tis to go  
And see those forms again—  
To see my parents-angels now—  
On Slumber's noiseless Train.

Yes, mother sleeps beneath the grass  
Close by my father's side,  
Where Mississippi's flowers grow  
And idly ebbs the tide.  
But soon I'll take an endless ride  
On Slumber's noiseless Train;  
When wild flow'rs bloom above my grave  
I'll see them both again.

## THE TWENTY-NINTH'S FAREWELL.

This little song was written just before the departure of the 29th Infantry from the Philippine Islands to the United States in 1904. While that regiment was serving in the Philippine Islands from 1902 to 1904 it was stationed a greater portion of its time on the Island of Guimaras, in the Visayan group, where a large reservation was cleared by the soldiers and good barracks built by their own hands.

We are tired of tropic breezes,  
 We are tired of tropic belles,  
 And we long to cross the ocean  
 Where the 'Mericano dwells.  
 Two long years we fought and battled  
 On the bonny Guim'ras Isle,  
 And we battled, nobly battled  
 With the bushes all the while.  
 From the jungles of the forest  
 Mighty, massive structures rose;  
 Speaking biblically: "The wilderness  
 Blossomed even as the rose."  
 We constructed roads and bridges,  
 Worked in mortar and in clay—  
 Never tired but kept on working  
 Just as hard from day to day.  
 Yes; perhaps our guns were rusty;  
 Our vocation was to dig;  
 All the calls the buglers "sabbied"  
 Were the sweet notes of "Fatigue."  
 We have left a trail behind us,  
 As a famous poet lined,  
 We have not been idly dreaming,  
 Footprints we have left behind.  
 O'er the cable comes the message  
 From headquarters o'er the foam,  
 Saying, "They have done their duty,  
 Let the Twenty-Ninth come home."

We are eager now and waiting  
For the final word to go;  
Tho' our transport's coming swiftly,  
It is coming still too slow.  
Let us as we lift our anchor  
Long in happy chorus dwell,  
"Three long cheers for bonny Guim'ras,  
Three long cheers and then farewell."  
Let our band as we are leaving  
Play the strains of Howard Payne,  
Let them echo o'er the island  
We will never see again.  
Let us as we lift our anchor  
Long in happy chorus dwell,  
"Three long cheers for bonny Guim'ras,  
Three long cheers and then farewell."

### A SOLDIER'S GRAVE.

On October 31, 1902, while on detached service in an out-of-the-way barrio on the Island of Guimaras, Philippine Islands, Private John Minix, Company B, 29th Infantry, U. S. A., was stricken with cholera and died within a few hours before medical aid could possibly reach him from Camp Jossman, twenty miles away. It was his death and sad burial in the solitudes of the native forest that suggested the following lines:

By the gentle, flowing river,  
Where the palms and mangoes wave,  
Where the grasses softly quiver,  
Is a lonely soldier's grave.

It was dark when he was buried,  
And the gentle rain did fall,  
As the soldiers tramped and hurried  
With that solemn, deathly pall.

Down we laid him with a murmur,  
As we whispered each to each  
Of the sad, heart-breaking rumor  
That would to his mother reach.

Far away across the ocean  
She was waiting patiently  
For the day of great commotion  
When he'd kneel beside her knee.

But beneath the island grasses  
There we laid him, meek and low,  
Where he slumbers with the masses  
Where the timid flow'rets grow.

Let him sleep as he is sleeping—  
For his land his life he gave—  
But at home his mother's weeping  
Once to see his lonely grave.



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---

Pluck one flow'ret for his mother;  
    Send it to her far away,  
For we know there is none other  
    Who would cherish it for aye.

Murmur, wind, and grasses quiver;  
    Gentle palm trees, lightly wave;  
For beside the flowing river  
    Is a soldier's lonely grave.

### THE OLD SPINNING WHEEL.

Up in the garret white with dust,  
     I chanced once to steal  
 And found a sight which pleased my taste—  
     The old time spinning wheel.  
 'Twas cast aside as useless now,  
     The "cranky" wheel must go;  
 In modern times of flying work  
     The old wheel is too slow.

So it was roughly cast aside—  
     This dear old spinning wheel,  
 Which many times had hummed a song  
     To an old time Georgia reel.  
 And when the boys would come to dance,  
     And bring the "gals" along,  
 The wheel would sit an ornament  
     Among the merry throng.

I wonder what dear grandma'd say,  
     If she were living still,  
 (But now she's sleeping 'neath the grass  
     Close by the silent mill)  
 Were she to only get a glance  
     Or even faintly know  
 The wheel was counted useless now  
     That she used long ago.

There's many a tale she'd tell about  
     This dear old wheel, I say,  
 Which, when a bride, she brought with her  
     From Georgia far away.  
 She'd tell of how she used to stand  
     And merrily would turn  
 While twisting thread, so soft and white,  
     Her heart with love did burn.

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---

She'd tell, too, how grandfather sat  
While she was all astir  
And told her of the ardent love  
He bore alone for her.  
But these old hearts are silent now  
And nevermore will love  
Till they unite again in peace  
In boundless realms above.

Down in the graveyard's silent shade  
They now forgotten lie;  
And in oblivion they will rest  
Until they mount the sky.  
So, too, the old wheel is forgot,  
Aye, like all earthly things;  
And as I stand in the garret dark  
It solace to me brings

That though we are forgotten here  
In realms of earthly wrong,  
That we will never be forgot  
Among the Master's throng.

## THANKSGIVING DAY.

That happy day is drawing close  
When erring boys who roam  
The land from Maine to Mexico  
Will long again for home.  
No matter what a man may be,  
A "Yank" or from the South,  
The thought of turkey baking brown  
Brings water to his mouth.

I've rambled east and rambled west,  
But it occurs to me  
That turkey's just as good in Maine  
As 'tis in Tennessee.  
When mother spreads the table out  
And we begin to dine,  
We don't care who's the President,  
The turkey tastes so fine.

We thank the Lord that we're alive;  
We thank him for the day  
When we can eat our fill without  
A doctor's bill to pay.  
We eat the pie that mother brings  
And doughnuts by the score;  
We simply eat the turkey up  
And wish there'd been some more.

We're thankful to the blessed Lord  
For good Thanksgiving Day;  
But some of us, if we but dared,  
Would humbly to Him pray  
To change this great and goodly feast,  
For 'tis exceeding clear  
That we would have Thanksgiving Day  
Come twice in every year.

## A DREAM OF THE FARM.

When nighttime has come and the winds from the south  
Waft zephyrs of odorous spring,  
'Tis then that I sit in my armchair and smoke  
And ponder on many a thing.  
Methinks as I sit in my old oaken chair  
I hear still the sweet-noted bell  
Of Star Face a-comin' right leisurely home  
When sunset has darkened the dell.

I hear in the barnyard the pigs and the geese,  
Like Babel the day of its fall;  
And father is raking the sweet scented hay  
To feed the tired ox in his stall.  
The gobbler is strutting his wings on the grass,  
His gills are all rosy and red;  
The chickens are singing their songs in the yard  
Before they retire to their bed.

The boys have returned from the field with their plows,  
And mother has welcomed them in.  
(Ah, now they are men, but how much would they give  
For mother's kind welcome again!)  
Louisa is singing a song at the well—  
A merry and rollicksome lay;—  
And all things go merry, methinks, on the farm  
When closes this amorous day.

I wake to my senses; my pipe has burned out;  
The moon in the heavens rides high;  
The zephyrs still waft their sweet perfume about—  
A man full of sorrow am I.  
Methinks it is sweet when the night curtains fall—  
(Oh, surely 'twill do me no harm!)  
To dream of the days that have gone long ago,  
When I was a boy on the farm.

## THE EIGHTH'S A-GOIN' HOME.

These verses were written just prior to the departure for the United States of the 8th Infantry from the Philippine Islands in 1908. The 8th Infantry was stationed on the Islands of Panay and Guimaras while in the Philippines.

While this regiment was serving in the Philippines and also since that date, an order existed requiring all regiments to make certain practice marches weekly; also to swim prescribed distances with full field kit and blanket roll.

There's a lovely snow-white vessel  
Come from far across the sea;  
Come to take us to a country  
Where we so much long to be.  
Yes; our big War Chief has sent it  
Far across the ragin' foam  
With instructions plain, emphatic,  
For the Eighth to hurry home.

'Cause he knows that we've been strayin'  
In this tropic land too long;  
'Cause he knows that our "cabeza"  
Nowadays ain't very strong.  
An' our Uncle Samuel loves us  
So he sent for us to go  
Back across the ragin' waters  
Where the temp'rate breezes blow.

Where the hikes may be a-plenty  
Yet there's roads to hike 'em on;  
Where there ain't no swimmin' orders  
An' a roll to swim upon.  
We may sometimes sit an' ponder  
Of a darlin' sweet Marie  
Sittin' in her bamboo "casa"  
Dreamin' dreams 'bout you an' mé.

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But we'll have a sweetheart yonder—  
    One that "hablas" English fine;  
An' her hair'll not be oily  
    Like the one we left behind.  
When we get a dollar yonder  
    In that land we're goin' to,  
It'll be a great big good-un,  
    And'll bring its value, too.

There a dime ain't called "peseta"  
    An' a "baca" aint a cow;  
Darn these "Islas Filipinas"  
    We don't like 'em anyhow.  
When the Eighth's a-leavin' harbor  
    On that glad an' happy day  
On two spots we'll look with pleasure—  
    Guim'ras Isle and fair Panay.

We will cheer an' scream an' holler—  
    All of us who're so inclined—  
Not because we love the Islands;  
    'Cause we're leavin' 'em behind.  
Then we'll soon see God's good country—  
    Our own darlin' U. S. A.,  
Land we love an' land that loves us,  
    Where we'll surely ever stay.

When we hear the East a-callin'  
    In its silent mystic strain  
(As most surely it will call us)  
    We will let it call in vain.

. . . . .

Yes; the big white boat's a-comin'  
    Far across the ragin' foam;  
An' the War chief sent a message  
    For the Eighth to hurry home.

## MY MISSISSIPPI STATE.

I rambled away from the home I had loved  
To seek for the riches of men;  
But soon as my ship to a harbor has come,  
I'll go to my old home again.  
I've long been away, but the girl I have loved  
Is waiting there patiently yet;  
Too true to deceive is my bonny sweetheart—  
She's waiting and ne'er will forget.

## Chorus:

Where the mocking birds are singing, and the vesper  
bells are ringing,  
She is waiting by the gate;  
Where the sun is always brightest, and one's cares are  
always lightest—  
In my Mississippi State.

I'm longing to see the old parents I left,  
And friends, who'll forever be true;  
They will eagerly wait for the tales I will tell  
Of sailors, and billows so blue.  
Another is there, and she's waiting, I know,  
Where one time she said she would be;  
So when I get home the first place I will go  
Is down to the June-apple tree.

(Chorus.)



LONELINESS.

The night is dark and the wind is blowing—  
The vines they slap at my window-pane;  
The night-birds shriek and the river's flowing  
In the lonely, drear November rain.  
My life is sad and my heart is aching  
For tender love that I've never known;  
What care the world if my heart be breaking?  
The world is loved and I'm all alone!  
When you but know of the pain and sorrow  
That fills the world which you think is bright  
You'll understand on some sweet tomorrow  
This aching heart on this rainy night.

### MY TREASURE.

Within a cozy, jewelled case,  
     And safely locked away,  
 Is laid the ring my darling wore  
     Upon our wedding day.  
 'Tis not a costly looking thing,  
     Like lords and ladies wear,  
 But millions could not buy this ring  
     I value it so dear!

How well can I recall the day  
     When she stood by my side  
 And said the words, so very sweet,  
     That made her e'er my bride.  
 'Tis forty years ago since then  
     When Bess and I were wed;  
 But twenty years my darling's lain  
     Out in the church yard—dead!

Her face—so fair—has faded now;  
     Her form has turned to clay;  
 But she's the same sweet girl to me  
     As on our wedding day.  
 When she was in her coffin dead,  
     Her hands so icy cold—  
 I knelt there by my darling wife  
     And took that band of gold!

I keep it safely locked away,  
     And only now and then,  
 When growing heartsick, sad and lone,  
     I look at it again.  
 The grasses grow above her grave;  
     The mock-birds sing around  
 The spot where darling Bessie sleeps—  
     That simple, lowly mound.

There's room enough close by her side  
     For one more narrow bed;

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---

I'll lay me down by Bessie's side  
At last, when I am dead.  
I'll join my darling once again,  
Where seraphs constant sing;  
And when I pass the "pearly gates"  
I'll give her back her ring!

## THE SONG I WOULD SING.

A poet sang of a little bird  
With a shattered, broken wing;  
He told the story so often heard,  
So oft the hearts of the tender stirred,  
What a sad, sad tune 'twould sing.

The poet told of the very way,  
In the merry summertime,  
While other birds were so glad and gay,  
This bird would sit and would never play,  
Tho' the days were like a rhyme.

Were I a poet with songs to sing  
I would tell another part;  
I'd never tell of a broken wing;  
I'd tell of a sadder and nobler thing;  
I'd sing of a broken heart.

I'd tell the way that the heart was broke—  
I would tell, if poet can,  
How heart as strong as the sturdy oak  
Was crushed with only a woman's stroke;  
How it left a heartless man!

## A FAMILY HISTORY.

I went to the old fam'ly Bible  
 Where father recorded the name  
 Of all of his lads and his lasses  
 The very same day that they came.  
 I turned thro' the old yellow pages;  
 The names that I saw—here are all—  
 John, William and Annie and Bessie—  
 The youngest were Flora and Paul.

I stood and I pondered those pages;  
 O, where are those children all gone!  
 They once were around the old roof-tree,  
 But now, like a bird, they have flown.  
 There's John—he the oldest and wisest—  
 Where now in the wide world is he?  
 His longing was always for sailing  
 Upon the dark, billowy sea.

He left the home port for New Zealand  
 One fine sunny morning in May;  
 And long mother watched, long she waited,  
 Till worry her life wore away.

. . . . . ! . . . . .

Next William we see on the record—  
 Observe, please, at once that is me.  
 In childhood we all played together,  
 But now there is none here but me.

The next one we see is our Annie—  
 The first of us all to depart—  
 Too true for this old world of sorrow,  
 Too noble her patient young heart.  
 We laid her to rest by the willow  
 Down near where the spring-brook doth fall;  
 From morning till night in the meadow  
 The mock-birds they whistle and call.

Comes next on the list little Bessie,  
 The wisest, most learned of us all;  
 Alas! but she wedded a drunkard;  
 Her life was made bitter as gall.  
 She worried and pined for her husband;  
 With fever she's stricken one day;  
 Her sorrow and fever's wild ravage  
 Soon wore her weak life-cords away.

We laid her to rest over yonder  
 Where mock-birds forever doth sing,  
 Where Bessie, our darling, is sleeping  
 Down close by the brook and the spring.

. . . . .  
 And, then, there is Flora, the darling,  
 The smallest of all of the girls;  
 The pet of all of the household—  
 The darling with ringlets and curls.

We loved her but she was too noble;  
 When fever was raging, our dear  
 Went forth as a nurse, and her tomb-stone  
 Says, "Sleep here our good volunteer."

. . . . .  
 The last one of all on the record—  
 Yes, the very last one of us all—  
 Is the jolliest one of the family,  
 The rollicking, rackety Paul.

And near to his name in the Bible  
 Is a clipping from out of the "News,"  
 Which tells of our hero's sad story  
 In fanciful lips like a Muse.  
 It tells how a soldier has fallen  
 In our tropical land far away,  
 Who bore the bright banner still forward  
 In thickest and hottest of fray.



---

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---

It tells how he fell and was buried  
In islands far over the sea ;  
Of all of this family of children  
There's none of them living but me.  
Sometimes as I stand here and ponder  
While sinks the bright sun in the west,  
Almost do I wish I could follow  
The loved ones who've entered to rest.

## NOT A CARE.

We have trod the rugged pathway  
Thro' the vista of the past;—  
Trod it with our hearts together  
But they're severed now at last.

I am sitting by my fireside  
Thinking of the Long Ago,  
And outside my window casements  
Chilly winter breezes blow.

All the little garden's covered  
With a sheet of snowy white,  
But my thoughts are drifting backward  
To another happy night.

When the zephyrs from the Southland  
Fanned her young, unwrinkled brow;  
Now, I'm sitting brooding o'er it;  
Ah, 'tis but a mem'ry now!

In the little garden corner  
Is a spot all white with snow,  
But beneath the small embankment  
Sleeps her faded form, I know.

But her soul is watching, waiting,  
Far beyond our earthly ken  
At the far-off gates of jasper  
Where she'll surely let me in

Parted now but not forever;  
Dearest ties are broken here;  
Over there there's not a heartache,  
Not a sorrow, not a care.



## IN THE FAR-OFF PHILIPPINES.

When the sun was shining brightly  
O'er the Mississippi hills,  
And the waters murmured lightly  
In the rivers and the rills,  
Stood a youth his farewell giving  
To a maiden of his dreams;  
As a soldier he was going  
To the far-off Philippines.

## Chorus:

"When the cruel war is ended, darling,  
I'll return and ask you to be mine;  
But when I am far away, my darling,  
I'll be still the same—and always thine.  
When the sweet magnolias bloom,  
And the mock-bird sings his tune,  
I'll return and still be always thine."

But the papers told the story  
How he nobly fought and fell,  
Fighting for the "Flag of Glory;"  
And his solemn funeral knell  
Echoed o'er the hills and valleys  
Of the Island of Panay;  
While his sweetheart thought and pondered  
O'er the last words he did say:

(Chorus.)

## WILL WE BE COMRADES THEN?

To my good Army friend, Musician Peyton Roscoe,  
Company L, 29th Infantry, U. S. A., these lines are  
dedicated:

When the years have drifted onward  
Down the beaten paths of Time,  
Will our friendship still glide smoothly  
Like a sweetly written rhyme?  
Will you not forget me, comrade,  
As you face the world of men?  
When you face the world of battle,  
Will we still be comrades then?

When you face the stormy conflict—  
Roam 'neath other skies so blue—  
Don't forget the dear old comrade  
Who tried always to be true.  
If you 'ever get in trouble—  
Should you sorely need a friend—  
Just remember dear old by-gones;  
We can still be comrades then.

Tho' perhaps we part forever,  
I cannot, cannot forget  
All the days when we were comrades;  
O, we must be comrades yet!  
Comrades, comrades—yes, forever  
Through the earthly walks of men;  
When we cross the "Pearly Portals,"  
May we still be comrades then.

## A DREAM OF THE PAST.

Last night I dreamed of days ago,  
Of childhood's hallowed past;  
Of days all fill'd with blissful charms  
Too pleasant far to last.  
I stood again beneath the shade  
Close by the old farm well;  
I watched the cattle languid roam  
Down in the pleasant dell.

The fragrance of that pleasant dell  
Pervaded everywhere;  
The tinkle of old Star Face's bell  
Distinctly I could hear, —  
Could hear as in the days of old  
When in the evening gloam  
I used to wander down the lane  
To drive the cattle home.

Across the fields I heard a strain  
Of music fill the air,—  
The same old song of Mary Vane,  
The girl I loved so dear.  
When evening came and I went forth  
To drive the cattle home  
She'd always wait beside the gate  
And sing there in the gloam.

Ah, Time, thy cruel hand has touched  
The beauty of her brow;  
The daisies in the pleasant dell  
Sway gently o'er her now!  
Long years ago she went away  
To with the angels soar;  
Tho' long I wait beside the gate  
She sings to me no more.

I always hear her in my dreams  
Still singing soft and low  
Whene'er I drive the cattle home  
In evening's tinted glow.  
Some day, when Life's great war shall cease,  
I'll soar beyond the stars,  
And Mary'll waiting be for me  
Still singing by the bars.

'NEATH A LITTLE MOUND OF CLAY

When the April flowers were blooming  
 In the Spring-time long ago,  
 Mother kissed me on the doorstep,  
 And her hair so like the snow,  
 Fell upon my boyish shoulders,  
 And her tears fell like the rain,  
 As she whispered, "I'll be waiting,  
 Darling, when you come again."

Chorus:

"I'll be waiting at the homestead,  
 Looking for you every day;  
 Don't forget that mother loves you  
 In the old home far away."

Years fled by with fleeting footsteps;  
 Then I rambled home again—  
 Home again to see my mother—  
 But my journey was in vain.  
 There stood still the old magnolias  
 Where I often used to play;  
 But, alas! my mother waited  
 'Neath a little mound of clay.

(Chorus.)

All the birds were sweetly singing,  
 And the swift Pearl swept along;  
 But I heeded not its music  
 Nor the mock-bird's merry song.  
 I stood thinking of my mother,  
 By that little mound of clay,  
 And her words I still remember,  
 As she kissed me and did say:

(Chorus.)

ALONE.

The night is dark and the wind is blowing;  
No stars peep out with a brilliant light;  
The night-birds shriek and the river's flowing—  
Is flowing swift thro' the dark, dark night.  
My life is sad and my heart is aching;  
No love speaks out in a gentle tone;  
I'm sad and lone and my heart is breaking—  
Is breaking sure, and I'm all alone!

UN-RETURNED LOVE.

The world may be a cheery place  
If those we love will love us;  
The heart will be as soft and pure  
As heav'n that smiles above us.

But if the one our heart has chose  
Does not see fit to love us,  
The day will full of darkness be,  
The stars ne'er shine above us.

The saddest thing in all the world  
By human tongue e'er spoken,  
Is, "Life was wrecked by wrong-spent love,—  
A heart has bled and's broken."

## WHEN THE DAYLIGHT DAWNS AGAIN.

O, dark is the midnight hour—  
So dark and full of gloom;  
And my heart is sad; for pleasure  
There is never, never room.

I long for the days of pleasure  
To come and ease my pain,  
For I'll be happy surely  
When the daylight dawns again.

O, days of truth and constance,  
When will you ever come?  
Before I'm sleeping lowly  
In the coldness of the tomb?

When the one I love shall love me,  
'Twill ease my heart of pain,  
And I'll be happy surely  
When the daylight dawns again.

When love shall be returned  
For an ever constant love,  
'Nd we love as do the angels  
In the brilliant Courts Above—

'Tis then that I'll be happy  
And free from grief and pain;  
When the one I love shall love me  
Then the day will dawn again.



A LOVER'S BALLAD.

The sun was fast sinking to rest in the west  
As I walked all alone by the sea;  
As I wandered my thoughts flew over the wave,  
And were ever, my darling, with thee.

Tho' oceans divide us, seas murmur between,  
Still my heart is forever with you;  
I'm dreaming always of those wonderful eyes,  
Like the stars in the heavens of blue.

I sit by the sea and think of my love,  
While the moon pours its radiant light  
Upon my sad form; while I list to the bird  
Sing its low, plaintive warble at night.

But love on, young heart; 'tis well that you love,  
Tho' you love at a terrible cost;  
For a man's life is nobler and purer at last,  
Tho' even he has loved and has lost!

## A LETTER TO MY MOTHER.

Lovingly dedicated to the dear old lady 'way down  
in Mississippi to whom it is addressed.

Mother, when the twilight lengthens  
O'er the hills at eventide,  
Oft I linger sad and lonely,  
Wishing I were by your side.

Oft I think of days now numbered  
With the dead decaying past  
When you soothed my aching forehead—  
O, that they could ever last!

Sometimes when the night-time hovers  
O'er my narrow, cheerless bed,  
Some kind angel whispers softly  
Of the happy days now dead;

Of the long lanes lined with cowslips  
And the gentle winds of May;  
Of the meadows where the farmers  
Gather in the new-mown hay.

I could hear the soft, low murmur  
Of the tinkling little rills  
Winding 'mongst the ferns and willows  
From the distant, verdant hills.

Mother, will those halcyon moments  
Ever come to me again,  
Making this poor heart grow lighter,  
Easing me of all my pain?

When again you clasp me, mother,  
To your gentle, loving breast,  
There my head will stay forever,  
And in peace and gladness rest.

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38    IDLE SONGS OF AN IDLE SOLDIER

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I will ever hover near you  
In sweet harmony and love,  
Till we pass beyond the portals  
Of that brilliant Court Above!

## TOMBIGBEE'S NAME.

It is always interesting to know why some of our rivers, lakes, mountains and even states, acquire such romantic, unusual Indian names. The following verses give the true cause for the naming of the Tombigbee River, a beautiful and fascinating stream in our Southland:

They are telling now a story  
How Tombigbee got its name,  
How a poor old coffin-maker  
Brought the queer name into fame.

Years ago when Mississippi  
Was infested by the braves  
Of the Chickasaws, and others,  
Who for dead men made no graves,

Came a lonely pale-faced Rambler,  
Settled near the river's flow,  
And upon the rippling waters  
Watched the Indians come and go;

Saw them heap departed Indians  
In embankments very high;  
So he made for them a coffin,  
"For your bravest when they die."

Thus they called him "coffin-maker,"  
Or "Tom-big-bee," as they say,  
And the river near his dwelling  
Call they that unto this day.

## ONLY A DREAM.

The brook meandered its way along  
While I stood upon its bank;  
The partridge whistled his autumn song,  
And the cattle came and drank.  
The leaves of autumn were falling near,  
Floating idly down the stream;  
The fields and forests were lone and sere,  
When I slept and dreamed a dream.

I dreamed I rambled the meadows o'er  
With a heart all gay and light;  
The light of eyes that I'll see no more  
Made both wood and field more bright.  
The rippling laugh that my darling had  
Was so very sweet to me,  
I soon forgot I was lone and sad;  
I was fill'd with mirth and glee.

A bird was singing his autumn song  
But his notes were lost to me,  
For I was happy the whole day long;  
I was loved, and love was free;  
We talked of seraphs and golden wings,  
While we watched the rippling tide;  
We could hear the harp with its silver strings  
Play the air for groom and bride.

I stooped to steal from her tender lips  
One kiss as a gift that day!  
I woke to find that the joys man sips  
Will forever fly away.  
I'd slept and dreamed on the brook's low bank  
And my darling whom I'd found,  
With whom the nectar of gods I'd drank  
Was asleep beneath a mound

Close by the brook 'neath a chestnut tree  
Where the autumn birds flew near  
And sang their songs full of simple glee;  
Ah, the songsters did not care!  
They little dream of the pain and woe  
That will fill a human life;  
I wish that I were a songster so  
I'd forget this pain and strife.

THE WIND'S ADVICE.

The day was done, the sun had set  
Behind the banks of red;  
How many hopes with it has gone  
Into oblivion-dead!

The wind sighed softly in the trees;  
It meant for me to hear;  
"Faint not, but ever struggle on,  
Tho' dark the roads appear.

"There never was a battle fought  
Without an hour of fear;  
No pinnacle we e'er surmount  
Without a bitter tear.

"Then, gird thy armor, face the world,  
And nevermore despair,  
For, tho' Life's road is fill'd with thorns  
The end is shining fair.

"Remember that the treasure-trove  
Is for the man who toils;  
And he who in the conflict fights  
Shall win the victor's spoils."

A SONG.

Are you thinking of me as I'm thinking of you,  
In your home far over the sea?  
Wherever you roam in this wide world tonight,  
My love, are you thinking of me?

I stood by the stream where so often we'd sit  
And talk of the sweet future days;  
O, Love, how my heart in pure sadness did break  
With sharp Disappointment's harsh rays!

Are you looking tonight upon those bright stars?  
Are their lights, too, falling on you?  
I wish some angel would come from above  
And make a bright star of me, too.

I would sit on my crest in the dome of the skies  
And look, Love, forever on thee;  
I think of thee constantly all of the days;  
O, Love, art thou thinking of me?



MY MISSISSIPPI HOME.

When the winter snow is falling,  
 And my heart is fill'd with gloom,  
 Think I often of the meadows  
 Where the lovely jasmines bloom.  
 I was but a youth, and longing  
 All the weary world to roam,  
 When I bade farewell to mother  
 And my Mississippi home.

Chorus:

But I'll never see again all those splendors; now 'tis  
 vain;  
 And I'll never see my dear old mother more.  
 When I left I broke her heart; there forever did we  
 part,  
 Near the jasmine at the old plantation door.

I was gay that summer morning  
 And all nature seem'd in tune;  
 All the birds were sweetly singing  
 In the treetops, bright and soon,  
 When I left the old plantation  
 All the weary world to roam;—  
 Left my mother weeping for me  
 In my Mississippi home.

(Chorus.)

Years have passed since that glad morning;  
 Now my mother's dead and gone;  
 She is gently, gently sleeping  
 In the churchyard all 'alone.  
 Oh, the message sweet she sent me  
 O'er the ocean's raging foam,—  
 Sent the truant boy who left her  
 In her Mississippi home.

(Chorus.)

All the world will now be gloomy  
And this heart be full of pain,  
Since I left my darling mother  
Ne'er to see her face again.  
But when Death shall loose these fetters  
And the world no more I roam,  
I will meet my darling mother  
In that bright Eternal Home.

(Chorus.)

### A LONGING.

I sit in my chamber while night hovers round  
     Alone, and my memory flees  
 Back, back to the days of sweet childhood's domain  
     My heartaches once more to appease.  
 Ere long I'll retire to my couch for the night  
     Alone with no sweet words of cheer;  
 O, worlds would I give if the worlds were all mine  
     If mother, dear mother, were here!

How fond does my mem'ry revert to the time  
     When snugly she'd tuck me well in,  
 And utter a prayer as alone mothers can  
     To make me all guileless from sin.  
 O, mother, come back from the world where  
     you've gone  
     And tuck me well in for the night,  
 My heartaches are many since you went away;  
     Come make it all care-free and bright.

'Tis years since you left me alone—all alone—  
     O, come just tonight once again  
 And tuck me in snugly and kneel by my couch  
     And plead for my freedom from sin,  
 Temptations are many since you went away;  
     The days and the nights are so long;  
 At nightfall no prayer and at morn ne'er a kiss  
     Nor melody sweet of your song.

I wish you would come, mother dear, to my heart  
     And tell me again of your love,  
 Just fold me secure to your arms once again  
     And fly to your home up above.  
 I'll now lay me down in my couch for the night  
     Alone, with no sweet words of cheer.  
 O, worlds would I give if the worlds were all mine  
     If mother, dear mother, were here!

FAREWELL FOR AYE AND AYE.

To my Army friend, Charles A. Grandi, Musician,  
Company L 29th Infantry, this effort is dedicated.

In a pleasant home one day, in Ohio far away,  
    Stood a youth his last farewell to say;  
"I must ramble, Love," said he, "o'er the land from  
    sea to sea,

    Seeking wealth to build a home for us for aye.  
When I've captured wealth and fame I will surely  
    come again  
And in old Ohio I will ever stay."

Chorus:

So o'er the wave he rambled, while the waters sang  
    and gamboled

    In the old Ohio River near his home;  
The girl still calmly waited for her love so long  
    belated,  
And she often wondered why he'd never come.

When the Springtime came each year she would gently  
    drop a tear,

    But she never saw the grave so far away;  
In a Cuban valley bright, stars would gently look at  
    night

    On the mound where slept her love from day to day;  
And the wind would whisper soft, as the palm trees  
    waved aloft,  
But they ne'er disturbed his sleep for aye and aye.

(Chorus.)

WHEN I AM DEAD.

When the April flowers are blooming  
 And the world is full of joy,—  
 Not a cloud to mar its sweetness  
 Nor a wind its peace annoy;  
 When the sky above is shining  
 With a face unblurred and clear,  
 I'll be sleeping cold and lifeless,  
 And I wonder if you'll care.

Will you ever in your rambles  
 Take the time to walk around—  
 Place some roses or some lillies  
 Fair upon my lowly mound?  
 Will you long, then, for the accents  
 Of a voice that's cold and still?  
 Will you, when you ramble near me?  
 Tell me if you ever will!

Or when Winter's chilly breezes  
 Moan above my lonely bed,  
 Will you ever have a heartache  
 When you think that I am dead?  
 Will your footsteps wander gently  
 Where I sleep beneath the snow?  
 Should you ever wander thither  
 I am sure that I shall know.

I'll be there, tho' you'll not see me  
 In my lowly, narrow bed;  
 O, I hope you'll not forget me  
 When I'm slumb'ring cold and dead!  
 Let one link in Mem'ry's cycle  
 Still cling on till life has fled  
 And you come to slumber with me  
 In the City of the Dead.

## IN THE LONG AGO.

Yes, my form may now be bending  
And my locks as white as snow,  
But the day has long since vanished  
When it was not even so.  
One time I was gay and sprightly,  
And was happy, just like you,  
And my life was like the morning  
Sprinkled o'er with drops of dew.

Then I loved a little maiden  
Near the blue Tombigbee's flow.  
(Oh, how sweet to dwell upon it  
Though 'twas even long ago!)  
When the Mississippi flowers  
By the wayside wildly grew,  
Gathered we the four-leaved clovers  
And the daisies, bright and blue.

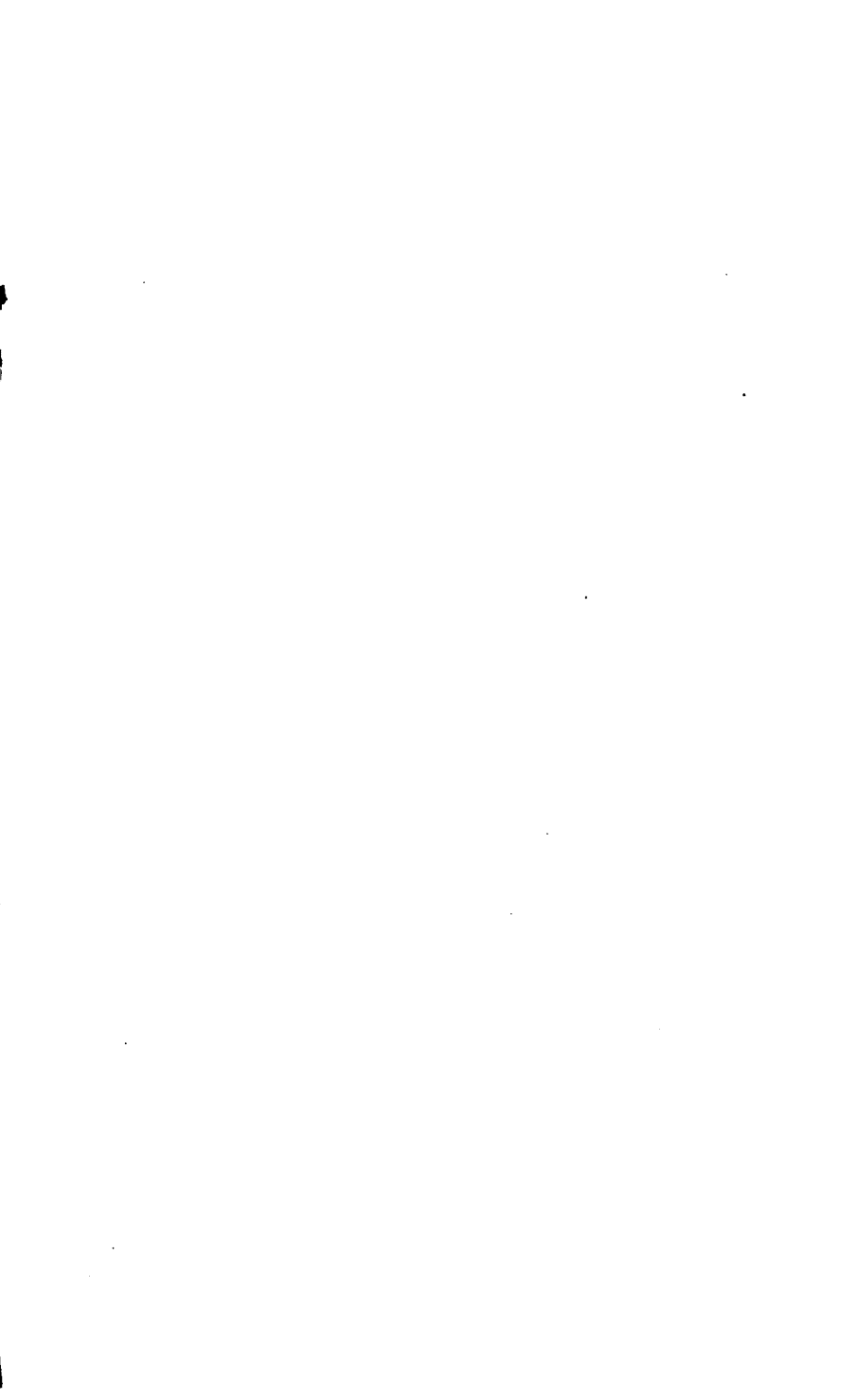
We would listen to its murmur  
As the bright stream swept along,  
Rippling o'er the stones and pebbles,  
Singing e'er a merry song.  
Thus I loved a little maiden  
In the happy Long Ago,  
Where the flowers bloom forever  
Near the blue Tombigbee's flow.

Years passed by, and I had rambled  
Far across the ocean wide,  
But I found no fairy regions  
Over on the other side.  
When my rambling mood was ended,  
Thought I of the river's flow,  
And the maiden who had loved me  
In the lovely long ago.

When I reached the little cottage  
All around was mute and still  
Save the waters falling gently  
O'er the rustic water mill.  
Near the river's mossy margin  
Was a daisy-covered mound  
Where my sweetheart waited calmly  
While the waters sang around—

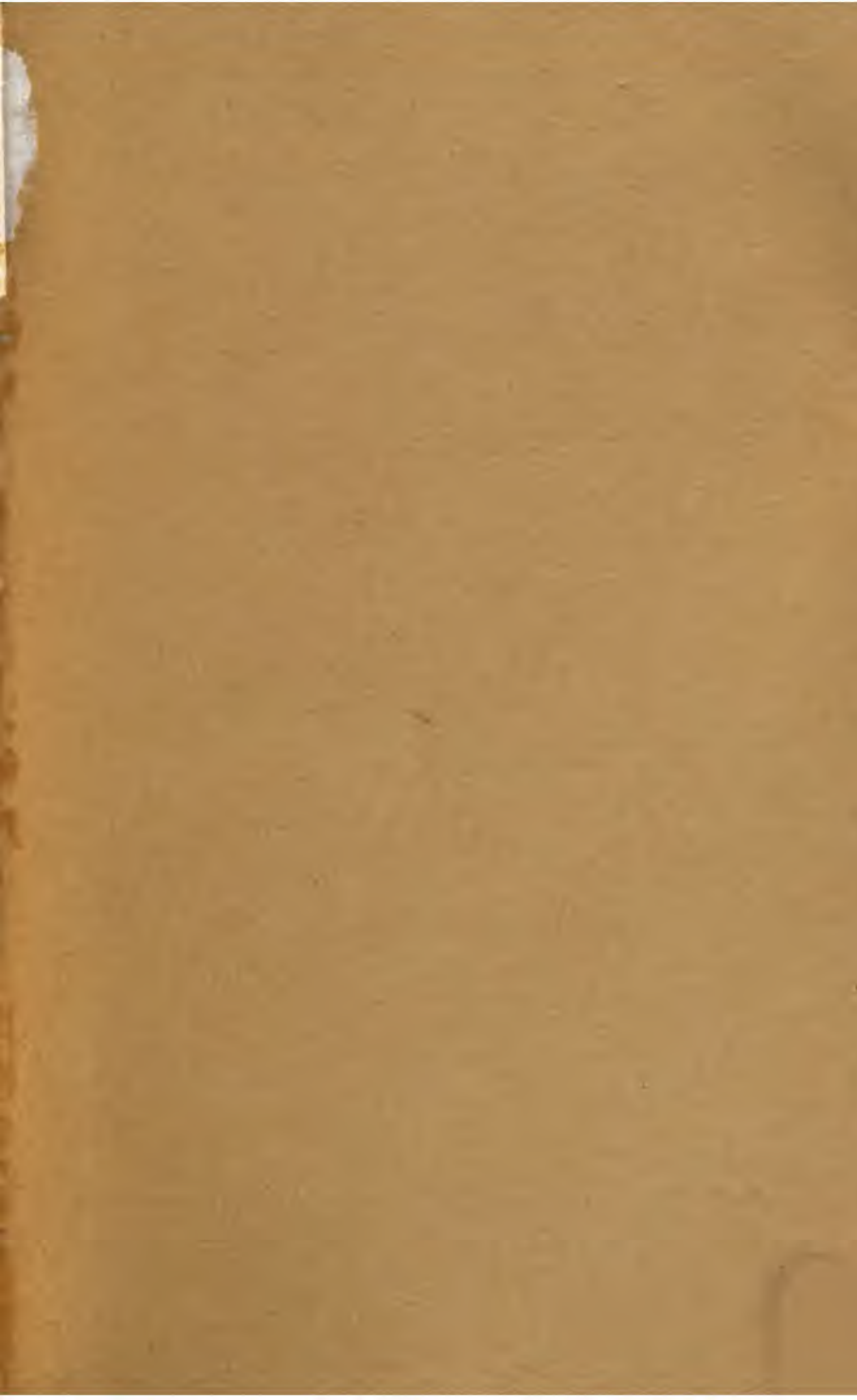
Sang the same tune it had murmured  
When we rambled in the glow  
Of a pleasant April evening  
In the happy Long Ago.  
Still this life is not the ending,  
For the tender cords of Love  
Which have severed been at parting  
Will united be above.











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